

## **Weirdness is a precious commodity**

We all stumble across the occasional weird guy who wears his pants on the unusually high side, brings lunch to school every day and grins with cabbage stuck in his braces. You know the usual- snide remarks passed behind their backs; they are always the last ones to be recruited into where team activities are concerned. Why is it, then, that despite constant hammering of 'do not judge a book by its cover', we dub these people weird at first sight, instead of embracing them as unique individuals already rare in mankind?

I've always wondered why dressing or doing something out of the norm grants people instant recognition as weird. My younger cousin is a boy, and after having viewed a 'So You Think You Can Dance' episode in 2008, he was bent on learning ballet. At our annual family reunion last year, when he was caught in the awkward stage between child and teenager, I asked him how he had dealt with two years of unfaltering scepticism regarding his unusual hobby. This boy's- this lanky, bespectacled, dancing preteen boy-pimples and all ('Weird', I hear you exclaim inwardly) - flippant response: "I like."

Yet I was bowled over by his reply. He was brave enough to pursue his passion and follow his heart without so much as giving a thought to what others would think of him, I thought, but at eleven? Instead of conforming to the majority and choosing a 'regular' activity like basketball, he had chosen one conventionally for girls. Standing up for what he thought was right for him earned him the status 'weird', when the word could very well have been 'individualistic'. Even as I write about how weirdness should be embraced, I bitterly admit that I lack the courage to do as my cousin did.

I once came across a book titled 'What Einstein Told His Barber'- and my first instinct was to doubt the fact that Albert Einstein even *had* a barber. When an image of him formed in my mind, I stumbled for a second- and I could not explain why my deepest impression of Einstein was not his genius, but rather his wacky hair. As much as his strange hairstyle is known, there are websites documenting Einstein's revolutionary theories titled 'Welcome to Einstein's *Weird* World'. Nevertheless, beneath his weird hair hid great talent and wisdom- a fact I recognise that has enabled me to see the intelligence and witty humour behind others' drooping spectacles and unkempt hair that people often find so weird.

These 'weird' people yearn acceptance- and deep down in my heart I know there are some aspects in which I do too. I recall attempting to strike up conversations with these courageous, opinionated, and- not to forget, weird people. I recall staring at them from afar, wondering how they get on with their lives. Try as hard as I might, though, I just cannot seem to sift out recollections in which I've openly pointed out the positive traits I see in these

people. Is it because I'm afraid to be labeled as one of them as well? I'm not brave enough to admit anything just as yet, as I believe others are. I know that what differentiates weird people is their courage to be who they want to be, and I continue to marvel at such courage so rare- weird *is* a precious commodity, after all.